

if you need to cut this, I suggest starting with the last paragraph, then the one on Gehr.

Chuck Kleinhans
2620 N. Richmond
Chicago IL 60647

312-252-6616

review for New Art Examiner
submitted Jan 16, 89

Experimental Film Coalition
Bauhaus Christmas show
at Randolph Street Gallery
Dec 88

Completing five years of monthly screenings at Randolph Street Gallery, the Experimental Film Coalition produced another characterisitically fascinating and unusual program. Loosely arranged around the theme of Bauhaus influence in filmmaking, the show included classics such as Moholy-Nagy's Lightplay Black-White-Gray, Fischinger's Composition in Blue, and Richter's Everything Turns, Everything Revolves, as well as more contemporary work showing the Bauhaus influence or more often general style and content configuration.

The broad ranging organizing principle included some dubious examples: Hollis Frampton's Lemon seems an ironic homage to Edward Weston's still lives of peppers tricked up as a lighting exercise. But in the realm of authenticity, most of the audience was audibly astonished at a marvellously high polished reconstruction of Oscar Schlemmer's Triadic Ballet. The 1922 version was carefully restaged by a German crew in 1985, giving us access to a work otherwise known only through production photos and writings.

The elegant and spare visual presentation associated with Bauhaus design was fully evident in some works such as Ernie Gehr's Serene Velocity. Putting this piece in the show was a wonderful programming inspiration which allowed new insight into Gehr's work which is typically placed in the "structural film" avant garde.

But it was difficult to see the sophisticated restraint of Bauhaus aesthetics in Paul Glabicki's Object Conversation, as technically and dynamically

accomplished as the animation is. However, by bringing together such a diverse assortment, the coalition programmers made a point about rethinking past heritages from European art cinema and called into question the typical US favoritism to the French 20s. Such a programming strategy, combined with intelligent program notes, raises provocative questions and gives the intelligently postmod audience an opportunity to examine a wide range of new and old work in an interesting context.

Given the limitations of the gallery space for screenings (always ably overcome by coalition's projection staff), the monthly screenings represent a distinct challenge to other exhibition spaces to consider media arts. Fall video screenings at the School of the Art Institute's northside gallery have averaged over 100 per show, and Experimental Film Coalition regulars have learned to show up early to get a good seat, or any seat, since the events typically fill the space. Chicago Filmmakers continues to showcase a wide mix of work. Clearly, a stable and growing audience now exists for innovative media arts programming in Chicago.

end

Chuck Kleinhans teaches film and video at Northwestern University.